Meeting the need...

A fairer, better system for Albertans

A White Paper on reforms to
the Alberta Day Care Program

Alberta Family and Social Services
March, 1990

90-03739/

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Planning for the Future...

Introduction

When day care funding programs were introduced by the provincial government in 1980, they were the first steps in a series of long-term day care initiatives to be developed in response to the changing needs of Albertans. The first programs were based on an understanding that there was an immediate need to provide an impetus for the growth of day care spaces so that more Albertans had opportunities to participate in the economy. Now, a decade later, that objective has been met.

The number of day care spaces available has outstripped demand, and there is a current 20 percent surplus. The work begun a decade ago to encourage the development of day care will continue, but now needs to be considered in light of the changing priorities and needs of Albertans. It is time to re-align day care funding priorities to meet the needs of those who most require assistance — lower income parents with preschool children. This will promote increased opportunities for Albertan families striving to achieve and maintain their economic integrity and independence.

In 1988, "Caring and Responsibility: A Statement of Social Policy for Alberta" was developed to provide a framework for the review and refinement of existing social programs. It was intended to guide future social policy decisions, and it forms the essential basis of the review which lead to the funding reforms presented in this paper.

Within the document, The Honourable Neil Crawford speaks of Albertans as a caring and responsive people challenged in adverse economic times to respond to those less fortunate. He emphasizes the need for government policies which "enable individuals, families and communities...to take increasing responsibility for caring for themselves and for those in need of help and support"; "support the individual's ability to make choices and decisions"; "recognize the paramount importance of the family as the basic unit of our society and the diversity of family structures"; and "strengthen and support the role of the family in Alberta society".

These must be our goals: to provide assistance to those who need it most, while supporting the right of all individuals to make decisions and take responsibility for their own — and their families' — lives.

There is a need in Alberta to re-examine the goals and beliefs upon which past day care policies were established, and to clarify the roles of government, parents and day care operators regarding care for Alberta's preschool children.

There is a need to re-affirm the right of parents to choose the kind of care that best suits their children, and to provide lower income parents with greater opportunities in making this choice.

And, there is a need to re-establish our priorities in providing day care service funding. Universal funding of day care through the current Operating Allowance Program has encouraged growth of the day care industry, and has now served its purpose. Universal funding has meant low cost day care to parents at a high cost to government, which has decreased the ability of government to respond to changing needs and priorities as they emerge.

Operating Allowance funding, which in the past has been used to subsidize all parents using day care centres, must now be re-directed to help those who need it most. We must help parents who require financial assistance to access day care, and we must also encourage parents who can shoulder a larger portion of the actual costs of their child's care to do so.

Consistent with the government's mandate as outlined in "Caring and Responsibility", we must strive for programs which are "established on the basis of responding to the greatest needs; ...take into consideration the financial considerations of the individuals affected; and, where possible, (are) designed to help individuals to regain their self-sufficiency and independence." We must ensure the best use of existing resources, and target those resources to where they can do the most good.

Synopsis

This White Paper presents reforms to the current structure of government funding for day care centre services, including child care subsidies. It also discusses reforms to training requirements for day care centre staff. There are no funding changes to the Family Day Home Program, as government funding of this program is directed to administrative services contracted out to private agencies.

In this paper, "day care centres" refers to government regulated and licensed day care centres; "day care" refers to day care centres and approved and licensed Family Day Homes; "informal care" refers to unregulated options such as nannies, babysitting and other private arrangements; and "child care" includes all of the above options, as well as care provided by a parent staying at home.

The reforms include the following:

- Over a period of three years, Operating Allowance funds currently paid to day care centre operators will be significantly reduced.
- These funds will be reallocated to an expanded Child Care Subsidy Program and paid to day care operators on behalf of eligible lower income parents.
- The four year freeze on new Operating Allowance Program funded spaces will be lifted as of September 1, 1990.
- Qualification requirements for day care centre staff will be increased over a period of three years, commencing September 1, 1990.
- The current required ratio of day care centre workers to infants (birth to 18 months) will be changed from one to three (1:3) to one to four (1:4).

The reform package will result in Alberta families having access to the most generous child care subsidies in Canada, and will ensure a continuing high quality of day care services. The Child Care Subsidy Program will reach out to a greater number of families as a result of increasing eligible income levels over the next three years.

These reforms are a continuation of the government's commitment to providing and refining day care programs which are responsive to the changing needs of Alberta's parents, and which promote high quality day care options for families.

Currently, Alberta's parents have the lowest average day care costs in the country and more spaces per capita than any other jurisdiction in Canada. **Government funding of this important family support service will not decrease through these reforms. Instead, funds will be redirected to increase help to those parents who need it most, and staff qualification reforms will ensure a higher quality of care for all day care centre users.**

Day Care in Alberta

Historical Background

During the economic "boom" years of the late 1970s, the Alberta government took steps to improve the availability and quality of government approved child care in order to help women participate in the economic activity of the province.

A province-wide day care program for preschool age children was established in 1978 by the Government of Alberta to improve the quality of day care available to Alberta's families. This was done by enacting a Day Care Regulation to set standards for licensing of day care facilities, pursuant to the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act.

Under this legislation, any person or facility caring for more than three children must be licensed, and each facility must provide a minimum of 3 square metres of space per child. In addition, the main regulations for day care centres include the following:

1. One day care worker on the premises must have a first aid certificate.

2. Staff under the age of 18 must not have sole responsibility for the care of any children in a day care facility.

3. The minimum ratio of staff to children must be maintained as follows:

Child's Age	**Staff : Child Ratio**
0 - 18 months	1:3
19 - 35 months	1:5
3 - 4 years	1:8
5 years	1:10

4. The maximum group size per activity must be maintained as follows:

Child's Age	**Maximum Group Size**
0 - 18 months	6
19 - 35 months	10
3 - 4 years	16
5 years	20

The Day Care Regulation also established a variety of other requirements to ensure the health, safety and proper care of children.

In September 1980, the Operating Allowance Program was introduced to promote the growth of day care spaces in Alberta in response to the growing need, and to encourage and assist day care operators to meet specific day care regulations.

From its inception, the Operating Allowance Program stimulated rapid growth of day care centres. Between 1981 and 1989, the number of day care centres increased by 87 percent, from 353 to 660. The number of licensed spaces increased by 100 percent, from 16,163 to 32,455 over this same time period. Operating Allowance funding increased from $3.2 million in 1980/81 to an estimated $33.8 million in 1989/90.

The growth of day care centre spaces outstripped demand, and a freeze on operating allowance approved spaces was introduced in 1986/87 in response to a 20 percent day care space vacancy rate. Exemptions from the freeze were

initially allowed for operators who had made tangible commitments to proceed with new centres prior to the freeze, but are now only considered for funding of new spaces in areas where there are minimal or non-existent day care services.

The Child Care Subsidy Program was established in August 1980 to assist lower income families with the cost of day care, while parents work or attend training programs. The exact amount of the subsidy paid to day care operators on behalf of lower income parents is determined using a sliding fee schedule based on calculated net family income and family size.

On September 1, 1989, maximum subsidy rates were increased from $240 to $280 per child per month. At the same time, the minimum required payment by parents was reduced from $45 to $40 for the first eligible child. Expenditures under this program have increased from $13.7 million in 1982/83 to an estimated $33.2 million in 1989/90. Within this time period, the number of children served has increased from 6,900 to 12,600.

The Family Day Home Program was started in 1981 to offer parents an alternative day care option in a small family setting. Under this regulated program, the government contracts with family day home agencies to recruit, train and monitor individual day home providers; collect fees from parents; and pay the provider. A monthly administrative fee is paid to these agencies in return for this service, reducing government costs which would be incurred if all 2,600 approved family day homes were licensed, regulated and monitored by government. The Child Care Subsidy Program is available to low income families using the Family Day Home system.

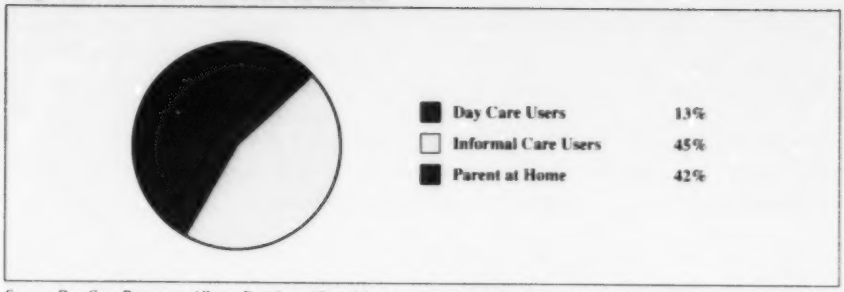
The Integrated Day Care Program was joined with the other elements of the Day Care Program in 1984 to assist day care centres with the cost of integrating children with special needs. Under this program, day care operators may receive additional financial support and consultation services to help care for children with special needs.

Child Care Today

There are various types of child care available in the province. These include the government regulated system of licensed day care centres, and approved and licensed family day homes; and, informal child care options such as nannies, babysitting, and other private arrangements.

There are approximately 171,000 families with children under six years of age in Alberta. The government-supported day care system is used by about 13 percent of these families. The remaining 87 percent have chosen other options: 42 percent of families have one parent at home to care for their preschooler; and 45 percent use other, informal day care arrangements.

Day Care Users vs. Non-Users in Alberta



Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services (based on 1986 Census Canada data)

One Parent At Home

In Alberta, about 71,800 families have one parent at home providing full time care for one or more of their preschool age children. Most of these families are two parent families. Federal government support for families with one parent staying at home in 1989 consisted of an income tax deduction of up to $5,055 for the parent at home, a basic child tax credit of up to $392 for each child, and a special child tax credit of up to $200 for each child.

Informal Child Care

There are about 79,200 families who use informal child care arrangements. If they use receipted care, they can claim a federal child care expenses deduction of up to $4,000. In addition, these families may benefit from the child tax credits. Those who use informal child care arrangements and receive no receipts may also benefit from the child care tax credit.

Regulated Day Care

Currently, the regulated day care system serves over 26,000 children in licensed day care centres and 5,500 children enrolled in approved Family Day Homes.

The 20,000 families who use the day care system have access to the same federal tax credits and deductions as families using the other child care options. These families will also benefit from 1989/90 Operating Allowance Program support totalling, on average, $1,690 per family.

The Operating Allowance is distributed to day care operators on behalf of all enrolled children, regardless of family income, on the following rate schedule:

Child's Age	Monthly Operating Allowance Per Child
0 - 18 months	$257.00
19 - 35 months	$131.00
3 - 4 years	$ 78.50
4 - 5 years	$ 65.00

A total of $33.8 million has been projected for expenditure in 1989/90 through the Operating Allowance Program. It is estimated that about $19 million of this will benefit non-income tested families.

Provincial government subsidization through the Operating Allowance Program means that all Alberta families using day care centres pay, on average, about $100 less per month when compared to other provinces.

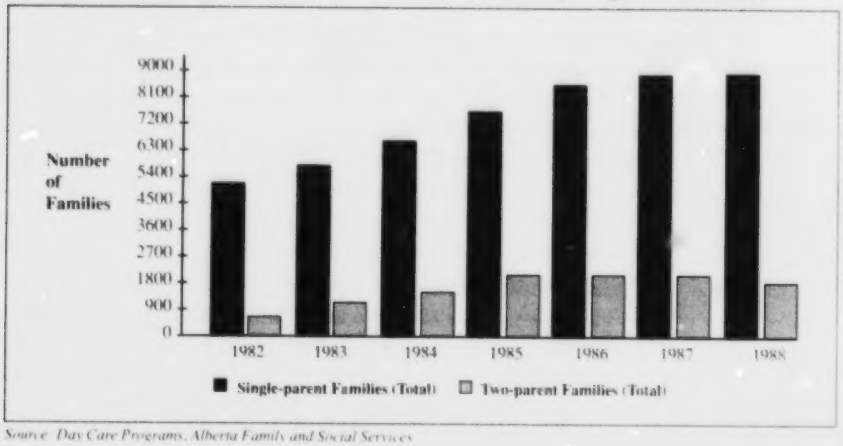
Lower income parents who use the regulated day care system will also benefit, through the Child Care Subsidy Program, from an estimated $33.2 million in 1989/90. This is paid to day care centre operators and Family Day Home

agencies on behalf of eligible families. Applications by eligible families for Child Care subsidies in Alberta may be processed as quickly as one week. In comparison, Toronto currently has 5600 children on a waiting list for low income child care subsidies.

Currently, 12,600 children in Alberta's regulated day care system receive a full or partial subsidy. Their average family income is about $16,000 for single-parent families and $18,500 for two parent families.

Approximately 80 percent of subsidized children come from single parent families. About 25 percent of all families receiving Child Care subsidies also receive full or partial Social Allowance benefits.

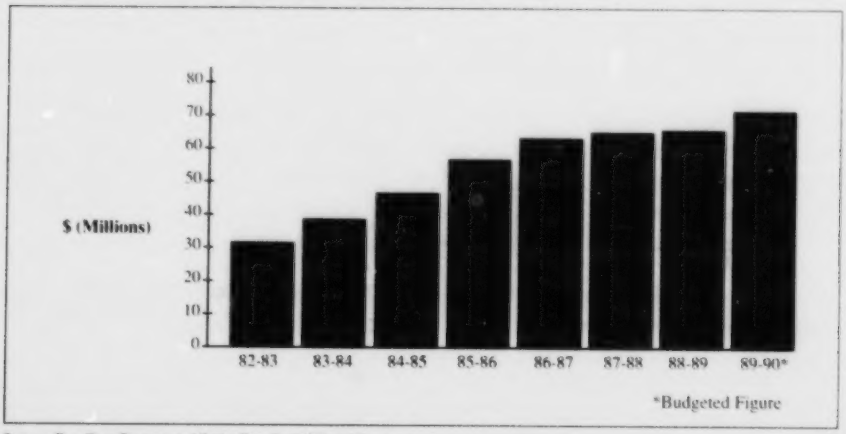
Number of Families in Alberta served by Child Care Subsidy Programs, 1982-1988



Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Total Government of Alberta financial support for day care services, through the establishment of the Operating Allowance Program, Child Care Subsidy Programs, Integrated Day Care Program, and Family Day Home Program, has increased from $30.1 million in 1981/82 to approved estimates of $70.2 million in 1989/90.

Day Care Expenditures in Alberta 1982/3 to 1989/90



Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Economic and Social Environment

"Social policy — to be effective — should not be developed independently of the economic environment. Similarily, economic policy — to be effective — must take into account the nature, goals, values and aspirations of people. Together, they blend to create a society in which people can grow and prosper."

The Honourable Neil Crawford
"Caring and Responsibility:
A Statement of Social Policy for Alberta"

Alberta experienced a period of extraordinary economic growth in the late 70s and early 80s — the "boom" years. Since then, however, there has been a move toward more cautious management of funds on all levels — personal, corporate **and** government — to concentrate funds where the need is greatest.

According to Statistics Canada, the economic news for most families is good: the average income for a Canadian family has reached an historical high of $46,185. In fact, Alberta had the second highest provincial average income at $46,283.

This increase in Canada's average family income may reflect the growing number of dual income families. This has become the dominant family type in Canada — a dramatic shift in the last three decades.

More women have entered the workforce. This is especially true of Alberta, with Canada's highest level of female participation in the workforce. In 1986, 54.2 percent of Alberta's married women with children and 67.8 percent of single mothers were working. As many as 70 percent of all Albertan mothers with children under 16 were in the labour force in 1988.

Alberta recently received praise from the United Nations for its educational initiatives for women. The availability of day care services in Alberta is a critical ingredient in fulfilling the government's commitment to increasing educational opportunities for women.

The shift in world industry, away from the technological era and into the information age, has meant an increased demand for educational and re-training opportunities for both men and women.

According to the Economic Council of Canada, in their 1990 publication "Good Jobs, Bad Jobs", there is a fundamental transformation occurring in the job market through systemic changes such as new technologies and new ways of organizing production. This has major social and economic implications in the areas of individual well-being and self esteem, social mobility and income distribution.

Education and training will become imperative as employment opportunities become increasingly limited for those with skill deficiencies. As the Economic Council of Canada emphasizes, "We believe that human resource development is an investment in the future. Canada's success in the emerging information-based service economy will depend heavily on its capacity to develop a first-rate work force; and that capacity must be put in place now."

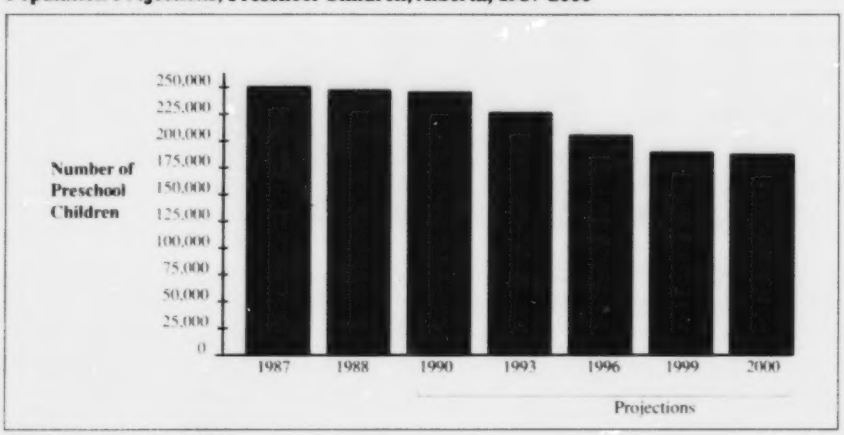
In order to develop increased economic independence among our families, the Alberta Government is prepared to continue its support of day care programs which may be used as a resource by lower income families to participate in education and training opportunities.

Although Alberta has a lower percentage of poor families than the national average, the largest proportion of these consists of single parent families headed by women, and families headed by a parent under 25 years of age. Our higher-than-average provincial divorce rate is offset by a higher-than-average re-marriage rate, but is also contributing to a growing number of single-parent families.

Assisting the participation of lower income parents in higher education and employment opportunities will ultimately enable Alberta to remain economically strong and technologically advanced. Day care services in Alberta now play a significant role in this respect and will continue to do so in the future.

It is important to note, however, that the coming years will see a decline in the overall number of preschool children in Alberta. Our population is growing older and our fertility rate is not keeping pace with our increasing proportion of healthier, longer-living seniors.

Population Projections, Preschool Children, Alberta, 1987-2000



Source: Alberta Government, 1988

This decrease in preschool population will impact our day care delivery system in the future, but should not deter us from continuing to form social policy based on the same principles which guide us now. Although the number of children to be served may grow smaller, day care will continue to serve an important and necessary function in the lives of many Albertan families.

Care and Responsibility

It is important that we constantly re-examine our day care delivery systems to ensure that they are meeting the changing needs of our population. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the basic responsibilities of parents, government and community involved in providing care for Alberta's young children.

The structuring of Alberta's day care system, and the philosophy behind the reforms, are based on certain beliefs about responsibilities for child care in this province. These shared responsibilities guide the development of government day care policies and the delivery of services to Alberta's preschool children.

The Role of Parents

Parents bear the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of their children.

Parents are responsible for choosing the type of care that best suits their child, and for the primary monitoring of the quality of care their child receives.

Parents are also responsible for shouldering a portion of their child's day care costs; the size of that portion increasing in relation to family income level.

The Role of Day Care Providers

It is the responsibility of day care providers to ensure that the developmental needs of children are effectively met, and that the physical environment in which care is provided is safe.

It is the responsibility of day care providers to advise parents of any health or developmental concerns regarding the child.

And, it is the responsibility of day care providers to ensure all government regulated standards which apply to their day care service are strictly maintained.

The Role Of Government

It is the role of government to support parents in their endeavours to select appropriate day care for their children. Government support in this area includes encouraging safe, regulated, day care alternatives and ensuring that day care information is available to parents.

It is the responsibility of government to establish and provide for enforcement of day care licensing laws and regulated standards of care which address the physical and developmental needs of children.

It is the role of government to provide financial assistance through subsidization of day care costs to lower income parents who need this assistance to maintain or enhance their families' economic integrity.

And, it is the responsibility of government to provide careful management of taxpayers' dollars in all program areas, including day care, so that funds allocated to social programs benefit those who most need society's support.

Partnership

The roles to be played by parents, day care operators and government are all important to the delivery of safe, quality service to our preschool children. Through awareness, cooperation and dialogue, Albertans can forge a more effective partnership based on doing what is right for our children and families. The new reforms, based on these responsibilities, seek to encourage the development of a better — and fairer — day care system for Albertans.

What do the reforms involve?

In order to promote increased participation in the economic life of the province by families with children, we must ensure high quality day care options. In order to provide effective management of public funds, we must ensure that social program funding focuses on meeting the needs of lower income families.

There is a need to refine the current day care programs to meet both objectives.

The reforms outlined below have been developed in response to the changing needs of Albertans, and the changing social and economic environment of Alberta over the last decade. They seek to ensure a high quality of day care is available in the province, and to commit more of the government day care funding to benefit lower income families using day care.

Operating Allowance Program

Reform to the Current System

Over three years, commencing September 1990, the monthly Operating Allowance paid to day care centre operators will be significantly reduced. The current four-tiered rate schedule will be collapsed into a single flat rate grant of $50 per month per enrolled child. In addition, the freeze on Operating Allowance approved spaces, which has been in effect since 1986, will be lifted.

Why?

One of the social policy objectives of this government is to ensure that program priorities respond to the greatest needs. Currently, about 30 percent of government expenditures in day care centres benefit non-income tested families through the Operating Allowance Program. With the reform, a majority of funding from the Operating Allowance Program will be transferred to the income-tested* Child Care Subsidy Program, thus benefiting a greater number of lower income Albertan families.

By phasing in this reform over a three year period, the majority of children currently in day care centres should progress to older age categories with only a minor impact on their day care fees.

What will change?

Each of the three years in the implementation period will see a decrease in Operating Allowance paid to day care centre operators. This payment schedule is outlined below:

Monthly Operating Allowance Rates

Child's Age	Current	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
0 - 18 months	$257	$190	$120	$ 50
19 - 35 months	$131	$131	$ 90	$ 50
3 - 4 years	$ 78	$ 78	$ 65	$ 50
5 years	$ 65	$ 65	$ 65	$ 50

In Year 1, the initial impact of the reduction will be balanced by a change in staff: child ratios for infants (0 - 18 months of age) from 1:3 to 1:4. This change should offset the need for increasing the cost of providing infant care with the reduction of Operating Allowance from $257 to $190 per month per enrolled infant.

During Year 2 and Year 3 of implementation, Operating Allowance rates for all age groups will be reduced, until an Operating Allowance of $50 for each enrolled child remains in 1992. This change will result in a loss of revenue to day care operators. Operators will, most likely, increase parents' fees in order to

* Income-tested means that gross annual income is used in determining eligibility and amount of subsidy.

to offset this loss. Fee increases will be offset for lower income parents through an expanded Child Care Subsidy Program. Higher income parents will pay an increased proportion of the actual costs of their child's day care.

The 1986 freeze on Operating Allowance funding for new day care centre spaces will be lifted on September 1, 1990.

New centres, or existing centres wishing to increase their number of funded spaces, may seek an exemption prior to September 1, 1990, in order to receive funding as outlined in the new payment schedule above. Those centres which do not receive an exemption prior to that date, or new centres established after September 1, 1990, will be eligible for funding at the rate of $50 per month per enrolled child.

Child Care Subsidy Program

Reform to the Current System

Over three years, commencing September 1990, a majority of funding from the Operating Allowance Program will be re-allocated directly to the Child Care Subsidy Program. In the same time period, the subsidy schedule will be modified to ensure more families are eligible for full and partial subsidy. Eligible annual income levels, which will peak at about $40,000 for some families, will result in the most generous child care subsidies paid anywhere in Canada.

Why?

The Child Care Subsidy Program is income-tested, thus ensuring that lower income families benefit from government funds allocated to day care programs. Increasing the income levels at which full subsidy changes to partial subsidy, and expanding the maximum eligible income levels for the program, ensures that the day care needs of more lower income families in Alberta will be met.

What will change?

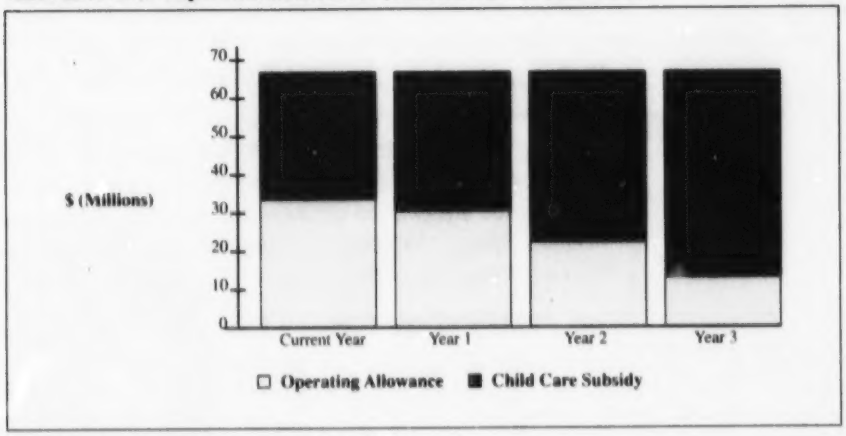
Total revenue available through the program will increase by about 60 percent over three years as funds are re-allocated directly from the Operating Allowance Program to the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Beginning in Year 1, and continuing through the three year implementation period, the maximum income levels at which families become eligible for subsidy will increase. This means that:

- More income-tested families will become eligible for the full and partial subsidies;
- The number of lower income families receiving subsidies will increase; and,
- Subsidy levels will respond to income level increases in a more gradual manner than under the current system.

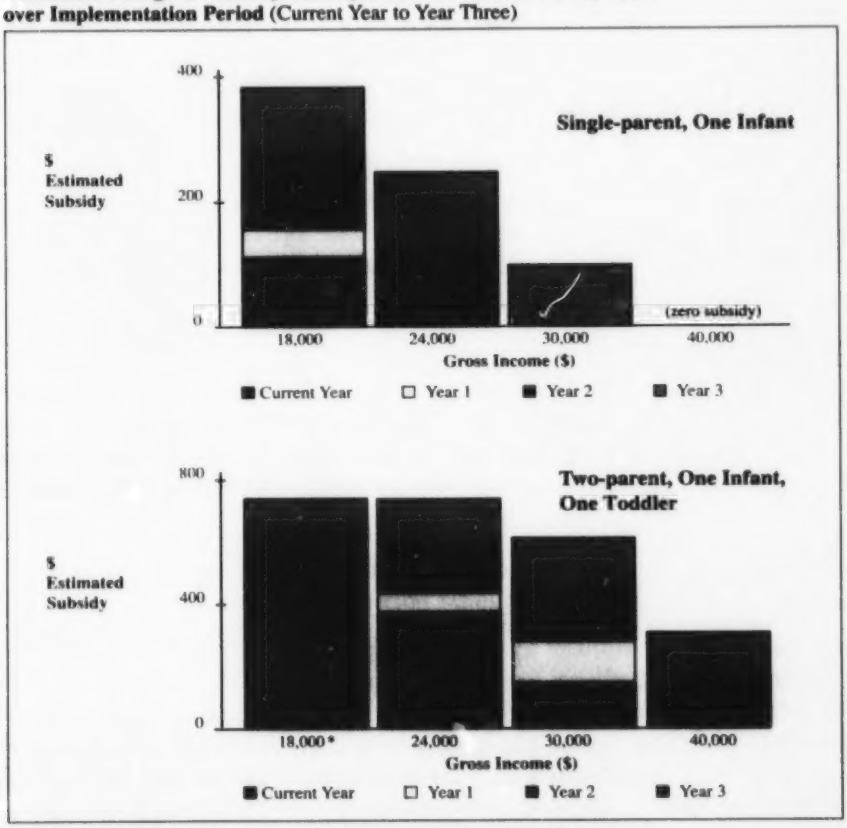
In addition, the maximum subsidy rate per child for lower income families will increase as the Year 2 and Year 3 reforms are implemented as illustrated in the following graphs.

Projected Proportion of Funding Allocated to the Child Care Subsidy and Operating Allowance Over Implementation Period (Current Year to Year Three)



Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Estimated Change in Monthly Subsidy Rates for Selected Family Type over Implementation Period (Current Year to Year Three)



Note: These projections are based on present data, and are only used to illustrate possible future trends.
*Subsidy does not increase in Year 1 because it is currently at maximum
Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Day Care Centre Staff Qualifications

Reform to the Current System

Day care centre staff training requirements will be introduced for all primary staff and phased in over a period of three years for existing licensed centres in Alberta. These new requirements will be placed in the Day Care Regulation and will become a condition of obtaining and retaining a day care centre operating license. Specific reforms to be phased in will only apply to day care centre staff who work directly with children.

Day Care Centre Directors: Effective September 1, 1993, all directors will be required to have training in early childhood development or early childhood education which is at least equivalent to a two year diploma offered by Alberta's community colleges.

Day Care Centre Workers: Effective September 1, 1991, one in six day care workers in each centre will be required to have training in early childhood development or early childhood education which is at least equivalent to a one year certificate offered by Alberta's community colleges. Effective September 1, 1992, that ratio will increase to one in five day care workers. Effective September 1, 1993, that ratio will further increase to one in four day care workers.

All day care centre workers, excluding those who have met the minimum standard of a one year early childhood education certificate, will be required to have taken a mandatory 50 hour Orientation Course or provide evidence of equivalent course work.

Why?

Research shows that the presence and involvement of trained day care staff is one of the essential components of quality day care for preschool children. Consistent with the government's commitment to ensuring quality day care for Albertans, the reforms seek to increase the level of training of all day care centre staff.

Day care centre directors play an important role in providing professional leadership in the provision of care to children. In recognition of this, a minimum requirement of a two year college level diploma equivalency is considered both reasonable and appropriate.

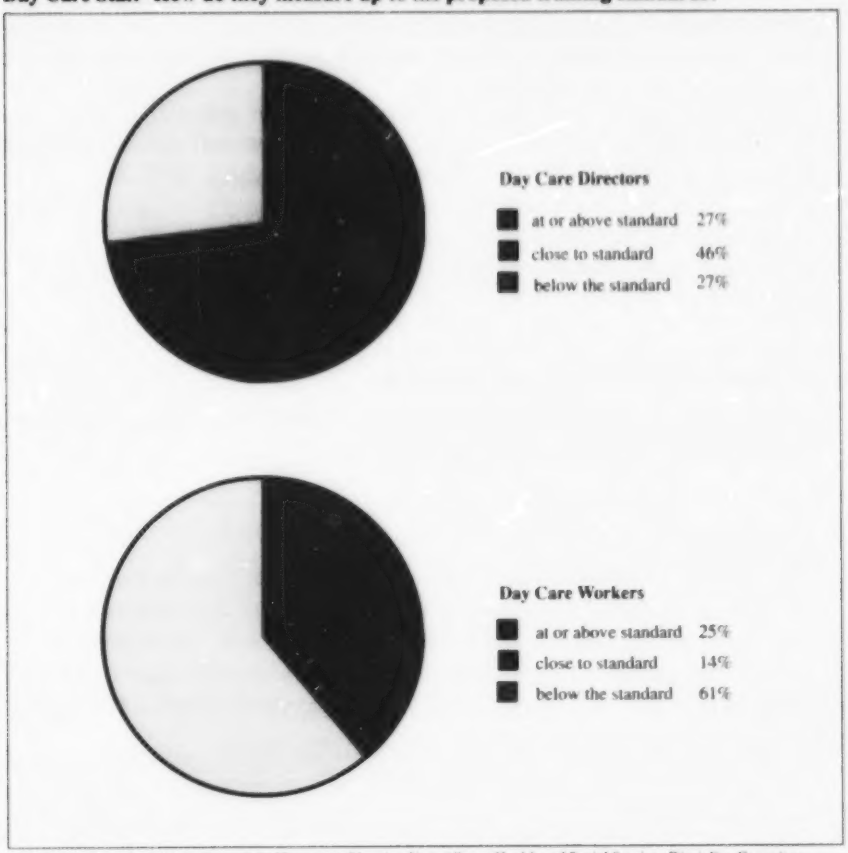
Increasing the ratio of trained day care centre workers to one in four in each centre ensures a better trained staff to complement the efforts and direction of day care centre directors. The impact of this ratio will be monitored and reviewed over time, and may be changed in the future.

Providing all remaining day care centre workers with a 50 hour course ensures that untrained staff have specific awareness and sensitivity to issues surrounding the provision of child care in a day care centre environment.

A 1988 study by the Manpower Planning Unit, Alberta Health and Social Services Disciplines Committee, found that 27 percent of day care directors held a diploma or degree in early childhood education. Twenty percent held related degrees or diplomas in Family Studies, Education, etc., and an additional 18 percent were enrolled in early childhood courses.

The study also found that 25 percent of day care workers held a certificate, diploma or degree in early childhood education; another six percent held related diplomas; and an additional five percent of day care workers were enrolled in early childhood education courses.

Day Care Staff- How do they measure up to the proposed training standards?


Day Care Directors
at or above standard 27%
close to standard 46%
below the standard 27%
Day Care Workers
at or above standard 25%
close to standard 14%
below the standard 61%

Source: Based on the 1988 findings of the Manpower Planning Unit, Alberta Health and Social Services Discipline Commitee, ***Day Care in Alberta****. Statistics quoted are based on the response of 598 day care centre operators to a questionaire sent to 647 day care centre operators.*

These statistics represent aggregate percentages of qualified workers in all day care centres surveyed, not the actual proportion of qualified staff in individual centres. However, as there is only one director per day care centre it is possible to presume that in 1988, 27 percent of all day care centres surveyed had already met the new director training requirement. A separate analysis by Alberta Family and Social Services shows that by 1988, 32 percent of day care centres already met the requirement of one in four trained day care workers.

These statistics indicate that the proposed standards represent a reasonable requirement which can be achieved by 1993.

What will change?

Alberta Family and Social Services will manage the development and delivery of the Orientation Course which will be available throughout the province for those workers who do not meet the formal training requirements. The department will also develop an equivalency assessment system which will

assess credentials from other provinces and countries against the one and two year early childhood education programs offered by Alberta's community colleges.

In order to accommodate the increased need for formal education programs, Alberta's community colleges will expand the capacity of their certificate and diploma programs in early childhood education. Particular attention will be given to promoting access to these programs for students in rural and remote areas, and to ensuring that the needs of day care centre staff are considered when planning the delivery of these courses.

A review of the implementation of all day care centre staff training standards will occur at the end of the three year phase-in period.

Staff:Child Ratio for Infants

Reform to the Current System

Change the current minimum day care centre staff:child ratio for infants, birth to 18 months of age, from 1:3 to 1:4.

Why?

The Alberta Government is commited to ensuring quality care for Alberta's children. Staff:child ratios, staff training requirements and maximum group sizes are three main factors affecting quality of day care. These three components must be carefully balanced in order to maintain quality day care and to ensure that limited funding is used for the maximum benefit of children.

In changing the minimum staff:child ratio for infants, this balance was carefully considered. In future, the new staff training standards will be implemented to ensure continuing quality care for children of all ages in day care centres.

The existing ratio of 1 staff to 3 infants does contribute to the higher cost of providing day care for infants compared to any other age group of children. However, in other provinces, the ratio of 1:4 has proven to be effective for the provision of care for infants. Implementation of this standard in Alberta will be carefully monitored to ensure that high quality of care is maintained.

What Will Change?

The staff:child ratio of 1 staff to 4 infants is a **minimum** standard that a parent can expect in a day care centre. Day care centre operators may offer staff:child ratios which are higher than the legislated standard, and parents have the right to choose day care centre options which exceed this requirement.

The new staff:child ratio may assist day care operators in adjusting to Operating Allowance Program reforms. This will offset the need for operators to increase fees to parents of young infants in the first year of implementation of the Operating Allowance reform.

Making It Happen...

Day care is a **family** issue. Increased day care opportunities for lower income parents enable more families to become stronger. And the new day care staff qualifications improve the quality of day care available to Alberta's families.

But for these reforms to work, there must be a strong and continuing partnership between parents and government to ensure that the quality of care is maintained. Monitoring of day care services must be a shared responsibility if we are to guarantee good care for Alberta's children.

For its part, the government will ensure that day care centres are monitored for compliance to the new standards. In the past, Operating Allowance funds to centres were tied to maintenance of staff:child ratios. In the future, the Operating Allowance will only be available to centres maintaining all legislated standards. All day care centres will be closely monitored for compliance, but there is a limit to how much government can — and should — do.

There is also a role for parents to play. Government monitoring systems are good, but parents visit their day care centre as often as twice a day. Parents are in the best position to observe the ongoing care their child is receiving. Parents also have an essential right to question, challenge, and follow-up on any concerns they may have regarding their child's care.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that the care their child receives is appropriate and meets the child's needs. To help parents do this, specific information is available at Alberta Family and Social Services regional offices. This assists parents in evaluating the quality of day care being offered to their child, and provides guidelines for monitoring the care their child receives.

Together, parents and government will ensure that high standards of quality day care are maintained. Any time there is a problem identified, either by government or parents, action will be taken to ensure that quality of care and the safety of children is not compromised.

Meeting the need... Day Care Reform for Albertans

Alberta is entering a new decade, with new challenges to be met and new priorities to be established. The strength and viability of our families is a top priority of this government, and day care policies are an important part of the government's response to family needs.

The guidelines for social policy development were outlined in "Caring and Responsibility" only two years ago. This provided the basis for the formation of government social policy in the province, and established the basic principles of the government's role in developing social programs.

One year later, the initiatives in the 1989/90 Plan for Action for Women were announced. These included directions relating to day care programs, including assistance to lower income families and staff qualification requirements.

The day care reforms respond directly to both documents. The Plan For Action for Women identifies government support of quality day care as an essential component in encouraging the participation of women in the economic life of our province. The principles established in "Caring and Responsibility" provide direction for government initiatives which seek to encourage strength and self-sufficiency amongst Albertans and Alberta's parents and at the same time seeks to help those who need it.

The funding reforms presented in this paper are preventive and pro-active measures that will benefit our province, both economically and socially. Our skilled labour force will grow as more parents access better paying jobs after skill-enhancement training; the economic potential of our working lower income families will increase; and the children of lower income families will benefit from increased self-sufficiency and self-esteem through greater economic opportunities for their parents.

Public resources dedicated to day care programs are being directed toward those who are in need, so that future generations of Alberta's families can establish and maintain economic independence.

The reforms will improve the quality of care that all children in the regulated day care system receive, and will use Alberta's tax dollars where they are needed most in the day care system — to assist lower income parents requiring day care for their children.

This will not happen overnight, and the reforms have been planned so as to provide ample time for adjustment and implementation over a three year period. Throughout this time, the government will carefully monitor the impact on groups and organizations which may be sensitive to the proposed changes. This includes middle-income earners who use day care, smaller day care centres, and the informal child care system.

As the needs of Alberta's families change, so too will the provision of government services to meet their needs. The reforms presented in this paper, and the careful monitoring of their impact, are integral parts of that on-going and essential process.

The reforms will result in a more equitable system that reinforces parental choice and responsibility — for child care, while re-directing funding to provide increased opportunities for lower income parents.

Meeting the need...
with a fairer, better system for Albertans.

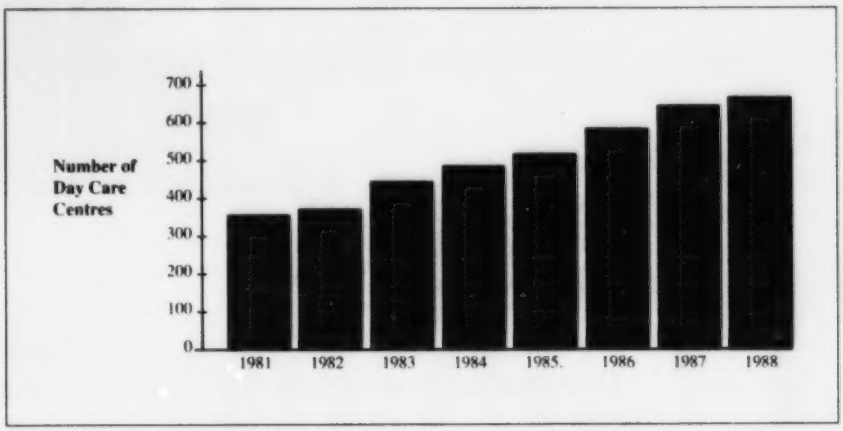
Dialogue is essential to the implementation of reforms such as these. Parents, day care operators and all Albertans are encouraged to respond to these initiatives by writing to:

Office of the Minister
Alberta Family and Social Services,
Room 104, Legislature Building,
Edmonton , Alberta T5K 2B6.

Additional copies of this document are available through your local MLA constituency office or by calling toll free 1-800-661-9691.

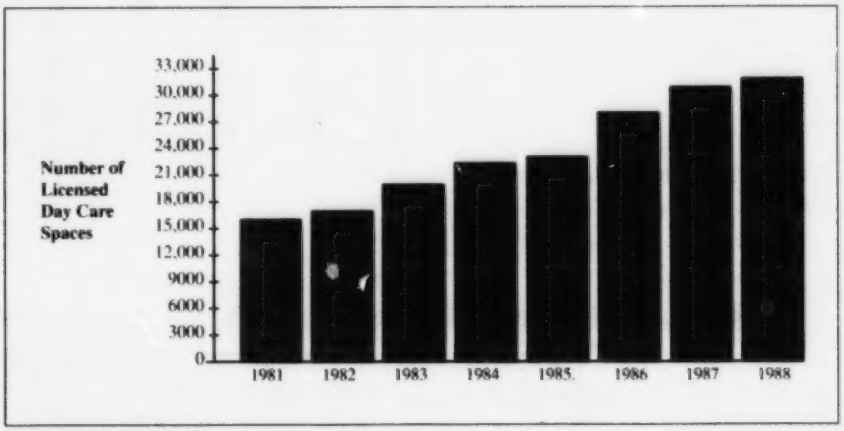
Appendix 1
The Growth of Day Care in Alberta

Table 1: Number of Day Care Centres in Alberta, 1981 to 1988



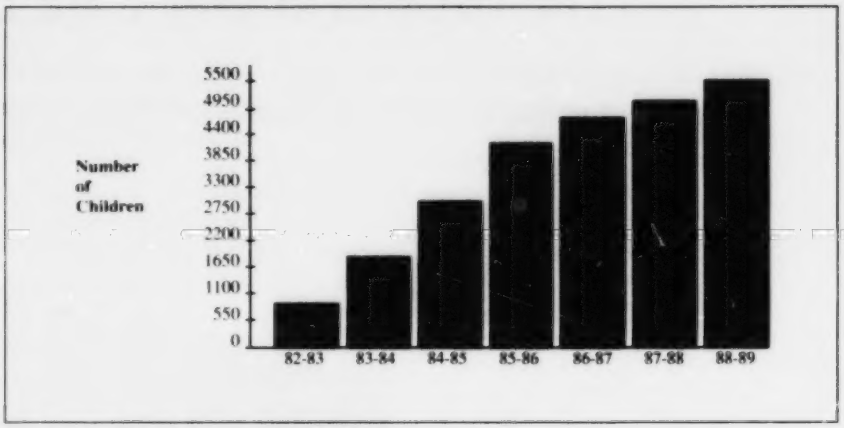
Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Table 2: Number of Licensed Day Care Spaces in Alberta, 1981 to 1988



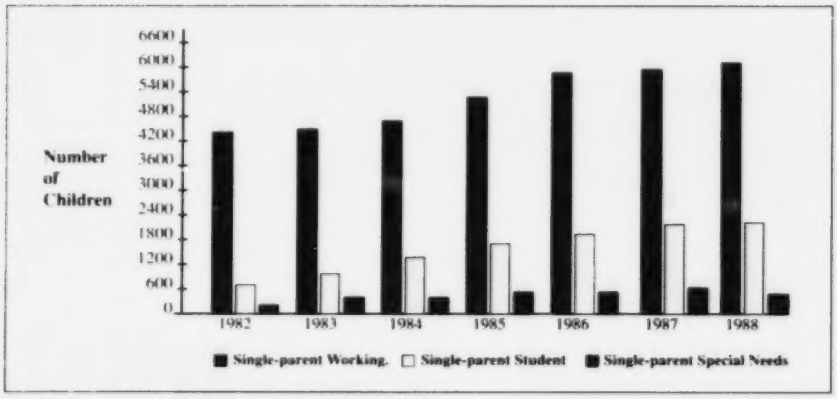
Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Table 3: Average Number of Children Enrolled in Approved Family Day Homes in Alberta 1982/83 to 1988/89



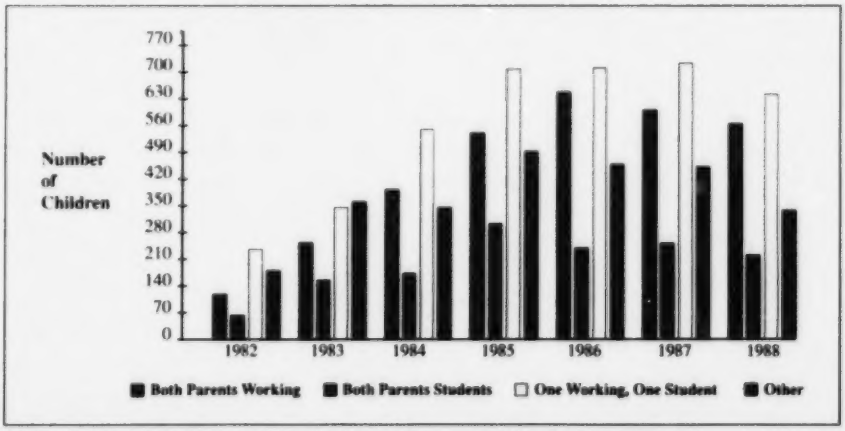
Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Table 4: Number of Children from Single-parent Families Using Day Care and Receiving Child Care Subsidies, (by reason for care) in Alberta, 1982-1988



Source: Day Care Subsidy System, Alberta Family and Social Services

Table 5: Number of Children from Two-parent Families Using Day Care and Receiving Child Care Subsidies, (by reason for care) in Alberta, 1982-1988

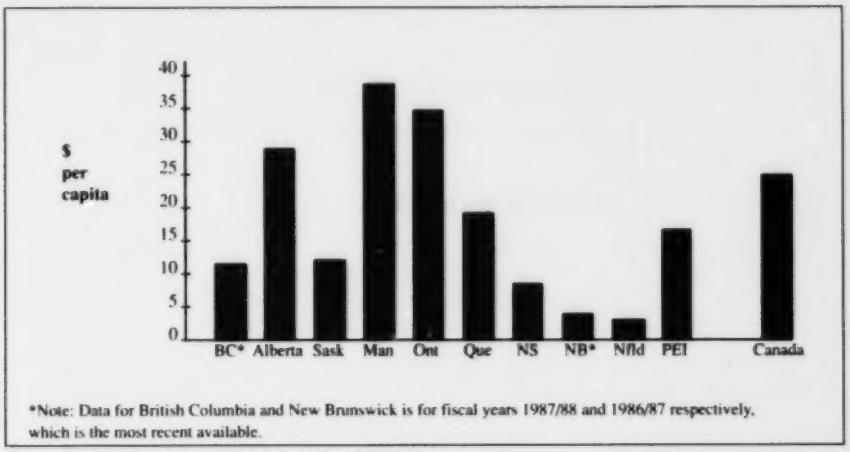


* Other - Includes figures for one special need and one working, one special need and one school, and two special needs categories.

Source: Day Care Subsidy System, Alberta Family and Social Services

Appendix 2
Across the Nation:
How does Alberta compare?

Table 1: Provincial Per Capita Spending on Day Care 1989/90



*Note: Data for British Columbia and New Brunswick is for fiscal years 1987/88 and 1986/87 respectively, which is the most recent available.

Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services

Table 2: Day Care Across Canada: Selected Comparisons

Operating Grants

Alberta

Operating Allowance in Alberta is currently provided for each enrolled child space in a licensed day care centre, regardless of family income. Level of funding is dependent on the age of child.

Operating Allowance (1989/90)

Age	Monthly Operating Allowance Per Child
0 - 18 months	$257.00
19 - 35 months	$131.00
3 - 4 years	$78.50
5 years	$ 65.00

British Columbia

There are no direct operating grants. There are, however, matching grants available for emergency repairs, emergency relocation, start-up costs, and grants for developing a family day care program.

Saskatchewan

There is a universal operating grant of $20 per space per month, regardless of the age of child. There are other grants available relating to start-up costs; for special needs requirements; and in the northern part of the province, a transportation and training grant is provided.

Manitoba

There are four major operating grants available. A maintenance grant of $80.67 per month is paid for every full time space. An additional grant of $6.70 per day per infant enrolled space is provided as well. A salary enhancement grant of $3,850 per year ($550 per year for non-funded centres) is paid to operators for every worker who is rated as a Child Care Worker II or III. A start-up grant of $450 per space is also available.

Ontario

Direct operating grants are formula driven based on numerous licensing requirements. Approximate monthly grants are $102.88 per space per month for non-profit centres, and $29.66 per space per month for commercial centres. There are also a variety of one-time capital grants available to operators.

Day Care Centre Spaces

Alberta is first in per capita day care centre spaces in Canada.

Staff:Child Ratios

Age	Staff:Child Ratio
Alberta	
0 - 18 months	1:3 (1:4 as of Sept. 1, 1990)
19 - 35 months	1:5
3 - 4 years	1:8
5 years	1:10
British Columbia	
infant - 3 years	1:5
3 - 6 years	1:8
Ontario	
0 - 18 months	3:10
19 - 30 months	1:5
31 months - 5 years	1:8
5 - 6 years	1:12
Quebec	
0 - 17 months	1:5
18 months - 6 years	1:8
Saskatchewan	
18 - 30 months	1:5
31 months - 6 years	1:10
Manitoba	
12 weeks - 1 year	1:3
1 year - 2 years	1:4
2 years - 3 years	1:6
3 years - 4 years	1:8
4 years - 5 years	1:9
New Brunswick	
0 - 24 months	1:3
2 years - 3 years	1:5
3 years - 4 years	1:7
4 years - 5 years	1:10
5 years - 6 years	1:12

Day Care Centre Staff Qualifications

Alberta and New Brunswick are the only provinces which do not presently require special training for day care centre staff. Saskatchewan requires a 40-hour training course from a community college. All other provinces have some requirement for a degree, diploma or certificate in early childhood education.

Source: Day Care Programs, Alberta Family and Social Services